

June 13, 2023

The Honorable Kara Hope  
Chair, House Criminal Justice Committee  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514



**Re: Assaulting Health Professionals and Medical Volunteers (HBs 4520 and 4521)**

Dear Chairwoman Hope and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the more than 33,000 dedicated employees of Henry Ford Health, I am writing this letter in support of House Bills 4520 and 4521, which will help protect our health professionals and medical volunteers from violence; these are the people who provide much needed care to patients in the communities we serve.

As one of the nation's leading academic and integrated health systems, Henry Ford Health, headquartered in Detroit, MI, serves patients across Southeastern and South Central Michigan, with six hospitals, ten emergency departments, and an extensive network of medical centers and outpatient clinics. We maintain our own private security department to protect patients and their families, visitors, volunteers, healthcare providers and all other employees across all our locations.

Unfortunately, we are living in a time where violence against healthcare workers is becoming all too prevalent. Healthcare workers are five times more likely to suffer a workplace violence injury than workers overall, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics. News reports across the country have spotlighted the increase in attacks on healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Press Ganey reports that approximately 57 nurses are attacked every day in the United States. Like so many of our peers, Henry Ford Health has experienced this increase in violence firsthand within our own facilities.

The vast majority of violence reported at Henry Ford Health that results in workplace injuries is the result of physical violence from a patient and/or family members towards one of our staff. These attacks are not only increasing in incidence, but also in severity, putting our staff in danger of injuries like fractures and loss of consciousness. In response to concerns about violence across our facilities, Henry Ford Health has invested in multiple workplace safety initiatives, including installing weapons detection systems in our major emergency departments, increasing staff training in de-escalation and safety, and offering a 24/7 support line for our workers. I recently published an opinion piece in the Detroit News calling attention to the plight of healthcare workers, and calling for more to be done at the federal level to address workplace assault and intimidation (see attached).

HBs 4520 and 4521 are a key step towards providing more safety for the hardworking individuals who have always stepped up to care for Michiganders, including during the darkest times of the COVID-19 pandemic and to the present day. Henry Ford Health appreciates that the bills cover both employees and volunteers, so that a broad range of the people are protected by the bills. The signage requirement is aligned with the broader effort by Henry Ford Health and the Michigan Health & Hospital Association to coordinate a communications campaign to prevent and address workplace violence in healthcare. The bills also exempt patients from the enhanced fine structure, an exemption that Henry Ford Health believes is needed to protect against behavioral health patients being overly prosecuted for behavior that is a direct manifestation of their health condition.

Henry Ford Health looks forward to working with the state legislature on these bills to protect our health care workers and volunteers throughout the state.

Please contact Sam Champagne, Manager, Government Affairs at [schampa1@hfhs.org](mailto:schampa1@hfhs.org) or by phone at 517-375-0987 or Marc Corriveau, Vice President, Government Relations, at [marc.corriveau@hfhs.org](mailto:marc.corriveau@hfhs.org) or by phone at (313) 876-8484.

Thank you for your consideration and work on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert G. Riney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'R'.

Robert G. Riney  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Henry Ford Health

Attachment: Detroit News Opinion – Riney: Protect against violence in health care (May 16, 2023)